

Of the Land, Of Another Land: Transferring Historical Indigenous Policy to Contemporary Immigrant Sentiments in Norway and Sweden

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Abstract

States experiencing influxes of immigrants may trend towards opposite ends of the policy spectrum: multiculturalism or assimilation. In contemporary immigration literature, the bulk of work attempting to explain why societies fall towards either end of this integration spectrum look to the domestic politics of states. This work examines the ongoing policy development and social shifts to the political right, phenomena that are largely explored in studies focusing on Scandinavian states. However, the influence of a state's past minority policies—particularly Indigenous policies—remains a potential influence on contemporary minority politics. Indigeneity is framed by settler societies' perspective of Native peoples having a different identity and relationship with the land than the dominant society. Similarly, contemporary negative perceptions of immigrants originate with their affiliation to a different homeland and culture. In both cases, an 'othering' process centered on land, culture, and values differentiates the minority groups from the majority population. As case studies, Norway and Sweden illustrate how recognition of Indigenous Sámi peoples in the cultural imagination, especially recognition of culture-specific needs, shapes later social sentiments and policy towards immigrant minorities.

Keywords: *immigration, Indigenous policy, minority policy, othering, Scandinavia.*

The contemporary immigration debate in Scandinavia is characterized by concerns about cultural deviation from egalitarian Scandinavian norms. The Nordic countries find themselves poised to respond with policies that align toward contrasting ends of the political spectrum: assimilation or multiculturalism.¹ Norway and Sweden each has past experiences putting into practice assimilation policies with their indigenous Sámi populations from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s. For decades, the indigenous Sámi were subject to stringent assimilation policies that severed links between people and the land. Today, domestic Scandinavian political attitudes towards the Sámi are apologetic toward past injustices, yet similar

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promotion of cultural assimilation appears in contemporary Nordic immigration policies. It is vital to explore the connection between historical treatment of indigenous peoples and current immigration policy to understand the developing views of Nordic states towards the validity of culture-specific needs, as these affect subsequent domestic sentiment and policy development towards contemporary immigrants.

Norway and Sweden seek to increase their soft power in international relations by demonstrating adherence to international law and domestic adoption of values embraced by international governance bodies. Both countries demonstrate commitment to environmental and human rights issues in their domestic and international agendas. Espousing such values domestically allows states to have greater sway in international forums and bolsters their reputations as norm-compliant states. In the past two decades, both countries have seen an increase in indigenous rights dialogue that has advanced to their national political bodies. Indeed, Norway's Finnmark Act of 2005 transferred land rights of 95% of its northern region to its indigenous inhabitants, citing the long-lasting and inalienable connection the indigenous Sámi have to the land.²

It is generally believed that homogenous states favor assimilation policies, but this rests on the assumption that there is an 'already integrated' society: the majority population. With the existence of such a majority, it follows in assimilation thought that the minority populations require integration into the whole.³ Yet, even homogenous states differ among each other in the degree to which they favor assimilation. Norway and Sweden have strong shared histories and similar cultures, thus causes for their difference in immigration policy may rest elsewhere. Some of the most widespread existing theories offering explanations for Norway and Sweden's immigrant policy difference suggest that differences are based on varying levels of social spending,⁴ varying overtness of national pride and identity,⁵ or varying degrees of fear that other cultures will undermine the pre-existing majority culture.^{6,7} While these theories have explanatory value for some small states, they fail to address a key feature that can affect attitudes towards assimilation versus multicultural policies. States, even those with as intertwined histories as in Scandinavia, differ in their historical treatment toward their indigenous peoples' cultural and land rights. If a state is unwilling to politicize and recognize indigenous citizen

needs, it establishes a trajectory toward contemporary immigration policy; it is less likely to extend similar policy towards non-citizens or new citizens.

Indigenous and Immigrant: A Parallel Between Sámi And Syrian?

In contemporary Norwegian and Swedish immigration policies, we see a tension between assimilation (pursuit of homogenous society) and integration (a looser concept of what holds citizens together under a cultural umbrella). These orientations may vary in policy dominance over time, but it is unrealistic to say that one ultimately succeeds over the other.⁸ A state's model of integration at the beginning of its 'immigrant experience' tends to be a rather weakly articulated conception of assimilation, both in practice and in concepts voiced by leaders. Over time, prompted by an increased perceived threat that immigrants may undermine cultural traditions, states begin to articulate assimilation policies into political dialogue. The content of this dialogue draws from existing narratives about culture and belongingness that exist in a country's domestic narrative of itself—its cultural imagination.⁹ For homogenous states such as Norway and Sweden, cultural rhetoric often focuses on a message of 'our land, our values.'¹⁰ Yet critically, variations of this motto featured heavily as justification for assimilation policies during Norway and Sweden's interactions with their Sámi minority populations through the 19th and 20th centuries. Given the simultaneous interactions and distinctions between indigenous and majority populations, a state's indigenous policy can provide a discursive foundation for subsequent discourse about culturally distinct immigrants, with whom fewer cultural or national traits are perceived. In this way, Scandinavian assimilation tendencies toward indigenous populations can provide ideological insights towards state policy inclinations today.

The remainder of this article examines nature of state sentiments toward, and treatment of, indigenous cultural needs in the 20th century, and how such state-indigenous relationships are signals toward future state-minority relationships (in this case, immigrant populations). First, a brief overview is provided on who the Sámi are, as well as their general treatment by Scandinavian states in recent history. Next, the article provides an overview of historical cultural policies in Norway and Sweden, detailing key policies and national events that capture the nature

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of state interactions with Sámi populations, first in Norway, then in Sweden. The article then examines two case studies—one in Norway, one in Sweden—that represent major situations where the state had to balance minority cultural needs with those of the majority culture. Both case study events feature heavily in each state’s historical narratives; as such, they offer excellent cases to examine to better understand how the state approaches balancing minority with majority needs. The article then discusses the implications of the Scandinavian states’ historical tendencies in recognizing minority needs through a contemporary lens: examining how each state recognizes the validity of, and responds to, minority immigrant cultural needs. Several cases of immigrant-specific policies are articulated, ultimately indicating that Scandinavian inclinations toward assimilation policies with indigenous populations continue into contemporary assimilation preferences with immigrant populations.

INDIGENOUS POLICY AND LAW: A PREQUEL TO THE PRESENT

This first realm of examination looks at state assimilation policies towards indigenous peoples since 1800 and moves into later revocation of limitations and policies using specific case studies from Norway and Sweden to present case studies as to how each state attempts to balance indigenous versus public needs. An examination of Sámi policy in each state—including revocation of stringent assimilation policies—illustrates how recently these policies have become national foci that grant further cultural and self-governance rights to their native peoples.

Setting the Stage: Who are the Sámi?

The Sámi are Scandinavia’s only Indigenous people. They speak a number of languages that range from dialectal variations to languages that are mutually unintelligible with one another. The historical region where the Sámi live—Sápmi—spans northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and part of Russia’s Kola Peninsula. Sámi livelihoods have historically included such activities as coastal fishing, reindeer herding, and fur trapping. Before the 18th century, there was infrequent interaction between Sámi peoples and the more southern Scandinavian societies. The 1700s saw increased movement of Scandinavian populations northward, which brought Norwegians, Swedes, and Sámi into greater contact with one another; consequently, Norway and Sweden national governments began more

aggressive colonization policies and sovereignty narratives. Over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, Norway and Sweden increasingly promoted narratives of Sámi as primitive and undeveloped societies that required civilization.¹¹ Norwegian and Swedish became national languages, and Sámi culture was, in effect, banned from public spaces. While similar cultural suppression and assimilation policies were enacted in Norway and Sweden, each state developed particular trajectories through its policies, setting the stage for the 20th and 21st centuries.

Indigenous Policy in Norway

Of the Scandinavian countries, Norway has the largest Sámi population, with estimates ranging from 30,000 to 60,000.¹² The Sámi story in Norway has been that of long-lasting domination, with cohesive efforts to eliminate Sámi animistic traditions beginning in the mid-1700s. In the late 1800s, school laws required all education to take place in Norwegian, while missionary boarding schools separated Sámi children from ‘traditional influences.’ These educational policies lasted for nearly a century, a single component within an era of efforts to make Norwegian culture and language universal. For an economically underdeveloped state with a large rural population, fostering national pride was part of a broader strategy to develop national unity.¹³

Pressures built from 1900-1940 to wipe out Sámi culture. Any family wanting to buy or lease land for farming in Finnmark was required to prove their Norwegian identity by registering with a Norwegian name and proving sufficient knowledge of the Norwegian language.¹⁴ In 1913, the Norwegian Native Land Act prioritized the most useful lands to Norwegian settlers. From 1913 to the years following World War II, existing assimilation policies were maintained and enforced.

Revocation of Cultural Policies in Norway

The postwar era saw a new Norway. Liberation was experienced not only in relief from German occupation, but also from culturally repressive laws in the North. The first news on national radio broadcast in Sámi took place in 1946; about the same time, school laws requiring all education to take place in Norwegian were abolished.¹⁵ From language rights came political rights, and in 1966, both were formalized through Norway’s ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 17 specifically

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protected indigenous peoples against discrimination and affirmed their right to enjoy their own culture. Norway's voluntary movement into rights recognition demonstrated a shift in policy. The 1980s was a period of symbolism and legal strides forward. 1986 saw both the creation of a Sámi national anthem and flag.¹⁶ In 1987, the Sámi Act was put into place: comprehensive legislation that affirmed, articulated, and ensured the existence of rights unique to the Sámi *because of* their indigenous status, as well as affirming duty of the state to protect these rights, not merely 'benevolently grant' them. Two years later, the Norwegian constitution itself was amended. Article 110a elaborated upon minority rights, adding that it is the "responsibility of the authorities of the State to create conditions enabling the Sámi people to preserve and develop its language, culture, and way of life."

A necessary part of minority group empowerment is the ability of the group to mobilize and form a cohesive voice representative of the interests of the whole. In 1989, the Norwegian Sámi Parliament was elected to provide a representative and consulting body for the Sámi. A year later, Norway became the first country to ratify the ILO Convention No. 169's protection of land rights concerning indigenous and tribal peoples. The most significant impact of this convention was its recognition of the Sámi as indigenous people, a group with specific needs distinct from other minorities. Yet the convention contained problematic definitions, and the impacts of its interpretations persist today. The treaty's phrasing of "ownership and possession" of land has been interpreted narrowly by the state.¹⁸ The activism resulting from the narrow interpretations has resulted in large gains for the Sámi, including land gains and concrete government-Sámi consultation procedures and recognition of *siida* (traditional village-level political bodies) as official institutions capable of consulting with the state on regional matters. While great political strides have been made among the Norwegian Sámi, the state ultimately considers itself a guardian of its populations, limiting this indigenous minority to the status of a ward.

Indigenous Policy in Sweden

Between 15,000 and 20,000 Sámi live in Sweden (by the most liberal estimates, at least 10,000 fewer than Norway). Despite this difference, a similar history of assimilation and attempted cultural extinction exists on each side of the Norway-Sweden border. Taxation discrepancies between

Sami and Swedish citizens began in the 15th century and continued far into the 1800s. Swedish settlers were encouraged to expand Northward through land right incentives, water rights, tax exceptions, and military exemption. The northern expansion of Swedes saw an infringement on Sámi land rights, and consequently cultural rights. In the 1840s, assimilation policies intentionally replaced colonization rhetoric under orders of the state.¹⁹ Consequently, the Sámi who were not incentivized away from traditional livelihoods were identified as ‘other’ than the Swedish. Throughout the following decades, many Sámi that refused to assimilate lost ownership of their lands through a series of grazing acts.²⁰ These new restrictions forced mixed livelihood Sámi people to choose between herding and other forms of livelihood, an extension of the Swedish - Sámi distinction laws that emerged in the mid-1800s. The state’s rhetoric was that Sámi livelihood was incompatible with civilized living. The legacy of early grazing acts, combined with persisting negative perceptions about herding and growing economic opportunities in southern Sweden, led to many younger generations seeking professions in mainstream Swedish society.²¹

Revocation of Cultural Policies in Sweden

Interest in forming Sámi issue groups was voiced domestically as early as 1904, but the first formal local Sámi organizations were formed in 1918. The first national Sámi organization came after WWII (1951) and marked the beginning of a period of cultural and legal developments that led to improvements in the political landscape for the Sámi. Notably, Sámi indigeneity, which distinguished them from other minority groups, was recognized in the Swedish Parliament in 1977. Later in the 1980s, the Confederation of Swedish Sámi was formed and acted to confront the limitations on herding rights that had previously been implemented in 1886, 1928, and 1971. While the court consistently ruled against the Confederation, the recognition afforded to the Confederation as a body legitimately able to represent the Sámi was unprecedented. Previously, Sámi matters could not be admitted by the court, but only by local police or the treasury.²² Sámi legislation, while ambitious in its goals, often did not translate comprehensively into Swedish practices. Sámi bill amendments introduced in 1992, which would have overseen a Language Act, opening of hunting and fishing, and signing of the ILO Convention 169, were dismissed, effectively rendering the adapted amendments to a negligible

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gain. To give a unified voice to matters such as those rejected in the bill, the Sámi Parliament was instituted. Its purpose was to safeguard, develop, and coordinate all matters of Sámi interest. Yet its practice was limited in empowerment to only deal with matters concerning fishing, herding, predator damage compensation, and language. The Sámi Parliament had no formal power, merely power of suggestion.

REFLECTIONS ON INDIGEOUS POLICY

Across the world, many indigenous people view and understand their relationships with their formal state governments as nation-to-nation relationships, and therefore consider their rights battles and gains as falling under the jurisdiction of international law.²³ This view is rarely shared by the state whose territory they reside in, and consequently in these cases, indigenous nations continue to be recognized simply as minorities—albeit ones in a unique position with special rights and needs. By not viewing the relationship as a nation-to-nation dialogue, the state sets up a framework for frustration and miscommunication in the procedures and expectations of both parties. Within Norway and Sweden, this is exacerbated by the limitations placed on Sámi power—existing channels merely allow policy recommendations and critiques rather than the power of actual policy implementation.

While the Sámi are often referred to as one group, they are not homogenous. The Sámi people span twelve major languages, as well as diverse livelihoods, national dress, and identities. Characterizing Sámi as a homogenous group is an ineffective political strategy as treating immigrants and their needs as homogenous. A potential weakness in Norway and Sweden's treatments toward immigrant diversity developed from initial faulty perceptions of Sámi as a unified people, skewing assumptions of immigrants as a similarly homogenous group.²⁴ The Scandinavian states, for all intents and purposes, view themselves as domestically homogenous, which facilitates pitting 'us vs them' need-based conflicts.²⁵ In this way, the Scandinavian countries are set up to view their culture as homogenous, and anything that does not fit that model is 'other.' The idea of a Scandinavian state is best understood not as a realistic description of the state, but as a rhetorical device meant to give legitimacy to the very understanding it was meant to describe, giving question to the idea that the indigenous and other minority groups are indeed 'other.' When

a government is not willing to recognize the identity of their indigenous minorities, they will be unlikely to legitimize the needs of newcomers.

Historical Cases: Balancing Needs Within Society

Norway's Alta Dam conflict and Sweden's Markbygden *Wind Farm controversy* illustrate state efforts to balance indigenous claims to land and livelihood with the potential to provide green energy to the general population, illustrating a dilemma of majority vs. minority needs. A high-perceived value of a collective good could override a minority's land claims in a state that places priority on the collective. This mindset, applied to a largely homogenous population, may play into contemporary attitudes towards balancing immigrant needs with the native 'cultural priority.' States reluctant to recognize Sámi traditional needs through a domestic cultural policy may be consequently less likely to recognize immigrant needs. We begin with an overview of the typology used in the conflict analyses, then provide action/response summary for each conflict, following with an outcome comparison.

Stopping Up Land Claims: The Alta Dam Conflict

In the late 1970s, the Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate outlined the construction of a new dam and hydroelectric power plant in Alta, Norway. The plan would submerge Masi, a Sámi village, and seriously disrupt reindeer migration and salmon fishing. The region that was to be affected by the dam's construction was indeed a Sámi community: over 80% of the 2,000 residents spoke Sámi as their mother tongue and were engaged in traditional livelihoods. In 1978, a movement began against the development. Named *Folkeaskjonen mot utbygging av Alta-Kautokeinovassraget* (People's Action against the Alta-Kautokeino Dam, hereon referred to as the 'People's Action'), it began as a local high school club with eighty members, a platform through which Sámi and Norwegians alike could organize and oppose construction work.

Initial injunctions against the dam's construction filed by People's Action failed; neither its potential environmental effects nor disregard for Sámi land rights were recognized. The Sámi began dialogue with the Norwegian national government while overwhelming municipal government channels. Disappointed with the state's minimal response, protestors (Sámi and otherwise) established the *Detsika Camp* next to the dam's construction site, passively disrupting construction. In late 1979, the

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camp reached its peak capacity of over 5,000 protestors. At the same time, Sámi representatives erected traditional *lavvo* tents outside the Norwegian Parliament and began a hunger strike. In response to pressures, Prime Minister Nordli announced a six-week delay on construction, yet when the Sámi took the dam's construction to the national courts, a distinction was made between the dam's impact on *Sámi issues* and *environmental issues*. The final verdict defended the continued construction, though the Norwegian government did switch to a 'less environmentally devastating plan' that, while not flooding the Masi village, did prove enormously disruptive to reindeer herding and fishing livelihoods.²⁶ Notably, the government maintained that construction changes were due to a re-examination of the dam's environmental impact, *not* as a response to Sámi protests. Construction continued unhindered until 1987. The Alta Dam fulfilled what was believed to be a collective good, overriding indigenous land and cultural rights.

The Markbygden Wind Farm Controversy

History presents a complicated relationship between Sweden and its indigenous Sámi. Sweden has a significantly smaller Sámi population than Norway, but still displays severe failures in its recognition of indigenous needs, illustrating a jagged line of recognition rather than a linear growth. Two brief examples can illustrate the contrasting support and backlash demonstrated. After the Chernobyl nuclear disaster poisoned vegetation and wildlife, over 73,000 reindeer had to be put down in Sweden alone. The government compensated its farmers *as well as* Sámi herders for the additional hardships associated with the radioactive fallout, making additional remunerations seven years after the accident.²⁷ Despite the promising nature of this voluntary remuneration, a contrasting frame of reference is found in the culmination of a thirty-year legal battle between the Sámi Girjas village and the Swedish government. While Sámi were granted exclusive hunting and fishing rights in the area surrounding the village, the state lawyers used outdated and offensive language and arguments to claim that the government had no obligations to recognize the "special rights of the Sámi people, whether they are indigenous or not".²⁸ Using a rhetoric of race biology, the government's representatives showed a disturbing indifference in indigenous policy. The attitude of the Swedish government towards Sámi in the past several decades can be summarized

with one statement: there is “no question that the Sámi are an indigenous people, but that is not the issue”.²⁹ In other words, the Sámi are a special category, but that gives them no claim over any treatment that would interfere with the common good. The developing story of Sweden’s Markbygden wind farms can give a detailed narrative to Sweden’s minority policy.

Markbygden wind farm in Northern Sweden began construction in 2011. Not expected to be completed until 2025, it would become the world’s largest wind farm. Plans involve over 1,000 turbines and an 800-kilometer road that would divide Sámi reindeer herding routes. It is expected that the project will destroy at least a quarter of Sámi pastures. The largest demonstration of state power manifested through the removal of veto power from local towns and Sámi communities in the goal of ensuring implementation success. Sámi complaints lodged against the farm construction from 2010 to 2013 fell on deaf ears, as state representatives maintained the legality of the project and its classification as a ‘non-Sámi’ issue, freeing it from indigenous consultation requirements.³⁰ Three events triggered Sámi mobilization in 2010 and 2011: the international financing of the wind farms, inadequate compensation of Sámi living in the construction area, and the rejection of compensation by some individuals.

The Markbygden wind farm construction is financed by German businesses. While some groups have lauded the German commitment to clean energy, indigenous groups maintain the internationalization of the project furthers the scope of its illegality. Sweden responded by maintaining the legality of international financing; because the international firms followed Swedish law, Sámi rights were being respected.³¹ Shortly after, Sámi communities living within the project’s territory were offered compensation for relocation. The amount deemed ‘insulting’ by the Sámi, was rejected.³²

DRAWING FROM INDIGENOUS CASES: APPLICATIONS FOR IMMIGRANTS AS A CONTEMPORARY MINORITY

As we observe the interactions between governments and indigenous peoples through these cases, we see that when states recognize conflicts as having indigenous-specific stakes—not as environmental issues—they

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have more productive interactions with the indigenous populations. By failing to recognize indigenous needs, the state falsely portrays an issue as being a common loss (environmental deterioration) against a common good (increased production of energy) instead of a unique indigenous loss. Much of the indigenous dialogue in each case is directed at identifying issues as having minority-specific salience. The remuneration of minorities is a direct recognition of their loss—a government will not offer compensation when they do not recognize the minority as having a special connection to the loss greater than that of the general public.

There are two ways this revelation affects social attitudes and policy towards immigrant minorities. When states recognize issues as addressing *cultural* needs, they are recognizing the validity and value of a culture other than that of the majority population. This is a vital attitude for multicultural policy. Additionally, when states open a dialogue and recognize the hardships of minority communities, the community's losses are validated. Recognition of a loss brings about acknowledgement that there will be continued interactions vital to having a successful civil society. Through these cases, we see both Norway and Sweden were reluctant to label their domestic conflicts as “indigenous issues,” instead restricting them as environmental issues. This resistance to deeply recognizing the cultural components of these challenges illustrates a segmenting outlook that suggests greater inclinations toward assimilation. We now turn to an examination of immigration policy within Norway and Sweden, providing both an overview of policies, and case studies, to identify the degree to which an assimilation narrative towards immigrant minorities persists within each states' national imagination.

Contemporary Immigration Landscape in Norway

Norway has experienced steadily increasing immigration rates and asylum seekers since the 1970s. The country employs a competency criterion to determine whether immigrants will be allowed entry and immigration pathways into the country. Historically, immigration and work permits are prioritized to highly skilled workers, or individuals who bring specific skill sets. In government-hosted surveys held across the 2000s-2010s, Norwegian citizens generally report low concerns about job loss potentially resulting from immigration; however, a majority of respondents feel that immigrant may not positively contribute to the

Norwegian economy.³³ Such perspectives emerge from emergent political and media messages that frame Norwegian cultural tradition as being infringed on by immigrant cultures. Within this context, two underlying principles have remained steady through Norway's development as an immigrant-receiving country: 1) immigration ought to be limited, and 2) once admitted, immigrants should have equal legal and practical opportunities in society. The second part of this principle has positive and negative effects.

A positive consequence has been the high ability of minority populations to attain representation in Norwegian politics, including at the national level. Norway's 2021 election resulted in the most diverse group of legislators comprising the Norwegian parliament in history. 11 of the 169 members elected to parliament represent minorities with African, Asian, and Middle Eastern heritages. That election year saw immigrants represented in parliament in rough proportion to their percentage of Norway's eligible voting population. Yet even as immigrants have gained greater representation in politics, the 2010s have also seen anti-immigrant populists make electoral and social gains. SIAN, one of the largest anti-Muslim membership organizations in Norway, saw drastic growth in the 2010s. Anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric continue to feature in Norway's far-right non-parliamentary party, the Democrats. The persistence of these rhetorics in national and municipal social and political spaces is of high concern to the potential growth or success of multicultural policy.

However, a challenge of Norway's immigration principles is that national policy tends to believe that, in order to attain equal legal and practical opportunities in society, immigrants must be integrated into Norwegian society as soon as possible. Integration is, by large, considered a prerequisite to fully and meaningfully participate in Norwegian work, life, and society. Integration thus can be facilitated through participation in language-learning and socialization programs. A 2011 report developed on behalf of the Norwegian government exploring integration policy advanced this understanding, recommending that integration should be understood through short- and long-term perspectives: short-term perspective should facilitate new immigrants' ability to quickly participate in society, while long-term perspective must include socialization that

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enables immigrants to attain equal participation in society.³⁴ However, it remains understood that it is the immigrants themselves who must adjust to participate in the new society, rather than society being structures to accommodate participation. For example, in recent years, the tools used by social workers and teachers with immigrant children and students have come under heavy critique. These tools, frameworks, and approaches, which are articulated and advanced in Norwegian immigration policy, largely approach child and welfare work from an assimilation perspective. This runs counter to a multiculturalist pluralist or individualistic-civic model of immigration and welfare policy. The predominant concern among those critiquing the current model is that the collectivistic-civic policy model from which these policies were formed has an inherent assimilation agenda; the result is that the actual practices of teachers, municipality workers, and child welfare officers aimed at immigrant children and youths, encourage assimilation as an explicit or implicit condition of support.

Contemporary Immigration Landscape in Sweden

Sweden has had four major immigration waves since the 1950s. The most recent, the fourth wave in the 2000s, can be meaningfully distinguished from the preceding three by one key contextual feature: in the 2000s, far-right parties espousing anti-immigration sentiments had become normalized and embedded in mainstream political dialogue and discourse.³⁵ Swedish anti-immigrant parties seek to limit immigration, and pursue this goal by making immigration policy more restrictive. Such ambitions are a reflection of popular social positionalities.³⁶ Surveys hosted in Sweden in the 2000s tend to find that natives believe immigrants are not good for the economy at large—although only about 16% of Swedish respondents reported that they felt that their status in the labor market were threatened by immigrants.³⁷ During the longer period 1990–2006, the proportion of Sweden supporting a more restrictive immigration policy has ranged from 43% to 65%, representing a majority of respondents. Even during this time, from 2000–2013 the number of asylum seekers (*not* individuals accepted) to Sweden has never surpassed 60,000 a year, representing a relatively small number on an annual basis.

Since 2015 there has been a major discursive shift in Swedish media and national political parties in terms of what is considered ‘typical’ or

‘reasonable,’ not only within the realms of what is acceptable immigration and integration policy, but also within the realm of discourse itself. Anti-immigration discourse in contemporary Sweden is not just relegated to the fringes of the political spectrum, but according to many scholars, has become more widely accepted within the political mainstream. In this way, anti-immigration and staunch pro-assimilation discourses are increasingly becoming sanctioned by more mainstream political parties and media outlets. An example frequently outlined in Scandinavian communications work notes that pre-2015, there was broad, if implicit, distaste among media outlets towards the far-right party Sweden Democrats.³⁸ However, since 2015, mainstream news outlets have increased coverage of the party and its platforms. The news site Samtiden, itself run by Sweden Democrats, has seen increased traffic, how the Swedish media environment and general populace has grown more permissive towards anti-immigration sentiment.³⁹ Such populist messages often broadcast rhetoric that attempts to appeal to the Swedish cultural imagination of what ‘means’ to be Swedish, drawing sharp divisions between who is considered to be individuals who belong, and those who do not. Such othering is reminiscent of older discourses about who ‘belongs’ and who does not in majority and indigenous policy spheres.

CONTEMPORARY CASES: ACKNOWLEDGING CULTURAL NEEDS

Looking at Norway and Sweden in the aftermath of the ‘fourth wave’ of immigration, we can identify two cases whereby each of the states had opportunities to enact policies towards immigrant populations that were aligned with either assimilation or multicultural philosophies : examining the support structures embedded into the Norwegian school for minority students and Sweden’s rapidly-changing immigration policy landscape from 2015. We would expect states with histories that are more acknowledging of cultural needs to be more inclined to pursue, support, and enact multicultural approaches in each of these cases, while expecting states that have pervasive social-homogeneity-oriented discourses to pursue policies more in line with assimilation .

Pluralism in schools? Language and support in Drammen, Norway

In Norway, municipalities and counties are responsible for monitoring the language support required in their schools according to student population

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needs in the district, and for adjusting language support to meet the particular language range and depth of support needed by school children. Counties primarily address language needs by either providing introductory Norwegian language classes for students, or by bringing in bilingual teachers to provide one-on-one support with students. Such instruction continues until a student gains a strong enough command of the Norwegian language to follow mainstream instruction. One school district that employs the national model in identifying and meeting student needs is in Drammen municipality. The school boasts a large immigrant population, with its student population representing over 52 countries of origin.

The school had caught the attention from the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs in Oslo, given concerns that the range of countries of origin—and therefore, in language support—would be difficult to fulfill. Concerns arose that the school may follow patterns similar to other municipalities that encountered such diverse language needs: that directives would continue to prioritize Norwegian, or fail to establish consistent practices in integrating bilingual lessons. After all, the assumption that language teaching should be taught and learned monolingually, without the use of students' own language(s), has been a leading theoretical approach since the late nineteenth century.⁴⁰ In other words: the educational context was primed to prioritize learning and instruction in the Norwegian language.

Multiple ethnographic and observational evaluations took place at the school from 2012-2016. The engagements with the school repeatedly found that instruction was, by and large, in line with a pluralist model of education. Teachers and administration in the school frequently surpassed policy obligations to provide language support for up to two years, in some cases prolonging support for three or five years, as needed.⁴¹ The school experienced an expansion of funding to host programs such as expanded Kindergarten, wherein young children gain increased exposure to Norwegian with the opportunity to have a parent or caregiver attend to create positive environments of inclusion. The school also championed the rapid adoption of open, online multicultural education resources for teachers and parents, such as those created by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, which contains teaching resources in

Norwegian and 13 other languages commonly spoken among immigrants. Each language has its own section where school subjects and supplemental information are displayed in Norwegian and the student's mother tongue. Recognizing, and accommodating for, language diversity in schools and the value of the mother tongue in understanding core concepts to this extent would be tremendously difficult to implement in a school system structured according to strict assimilation principles.⁴²

Rapid Policy Pivoting: The 2015 Swedish Response to Asylum-Seekers

Throughout the early 2010s, the number of asylum seekers looking to enter Sweden was relatively low—under 60,000 annually—though this number more than doubled in 2015. Taken by surprise, the Swedish Migration Agency, which historically took care of the logistics of supporting and tracking asylum seekers, ended up needing to enlist the help of civil organizations and municipalities to arrange the reception of these asylum seekers in the first days upon arriving. The spike of asylum seekers and their plights initially garnered feelings of sympathy, empathy, and a desire to help in the media and public consciousness. However, these sentiments soon shifted, and popular media outlets began to report on concerns of criminality and illegality. This discursive shift, relatively rapid and visible in the mainstream Swedish media, set the backdrop for several notable policy changes.

In November 2015, in response to the unprecedented numbers of asylum seekers, Sweden announced that it would begin using temporary border and ID controls. This was the first use of such instruments since the state entered the Schengen Agreement in 1995. As part of the checks, border police required identification of all persons entering Sweden. Individuals were required to either immediately request asylum in Sweden or turn back. This immediate declaration had adverse effects on potential asylum seekers: it prevented them from doing so later in another country. The new policies went into effect on 4 January 2016.

Simultaneously, in November 2015, parliamentary members in Sweden proposed a temporary law that all asylum seekers would only be able to receive temporary, residency if asylum were granted in Sweden, compared to permanent residency. Under these new rules, each asylum-seeker's temporary residency would have been limited to either three years or 13 months, though it would be possible to extend the temporary

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residency if deemed appropriate by Swedish authorities. The proposals received—to some extent—an unexpectedly high degree of support among the general populace, with some reports suggesting they were long overdue corrections to Sweden's otherwise generous immigration policies. Such policy happened within the context of an increased rhetorical focus on the idea of a 'golden age'—a period pre- mid-1970s, when immigration to Sweden 'changed character.' This discourse increasingly included comparing the present to a homogeneous past, painted in rosy tones.

REFLECTING ON CONTEMPORARY EVENTS

Taking in the tendencies of Norwegian and Swedish policies toward either pluralism or multiculturalism, we see some variation in each state's willingness to acknowledge and respond to culture-specific needs. In the case of Norway, there has been a greater inclination, historically, to understand majority-minority culture conflicts as containing cultural dimensions, not merely environmental issues. A willingness to identify minority needs can translate well across the minority group being addressed—for example, from indigenous to immigrant. The case of addressing and reconciling minority student language needs in Norwegian schools is the result of identifying a need with minority-specific salience and direct recognition of a gap that must be filled in order for immigrant and first-generation children to fully participate in Norwegian society. This does not mean a universal track record of acknowledging cultural needs, but rather the discursive spaces in which these decisions are taken may contain elements that are more facilitative of acknowledging cultural needs.

Conversely, in the case of Sweden, there are tendencies across time toward assimilation policies, both in terms of its indigenous and immigrant populations. Across time, Swedish political discourse has presented itself as more willing to frame issues with 'us versus them' depictions, with the 'us' consisting of ethnic Swedes. In the case of indigenous concerns, the government framed the net benefit of a new energy source toward the state-at-large as a priority over indigenous herding land lost. In the case of the new asylum policy implementation, the state prioritized the perceived wellbeing of the general 'Swedish' populace against the needs of potential future residents and asylum seekers, even as such concerns were driven by

speculation and sentiments, rather than concrete evidence that asylum seekers could have a negative impact on Swedish society.

In each case there is variation in how the states address cultural needs. There is variation in how policy acknowledges differences stemming from cultural differences, and in how policy works to remedy or address the implications of these differences. While these cases do not attempt to fully capture each state's complex relationship with ethnic minorities, they are illustrative of general tendencies toward assimilation or pluralism, and how such tendencies can play out into real-world examples. In either case, it seems that Norway and Sweden are fast becoming not-quite-so-homogenous as previously believed, experiencing demographic shifts that will have continued implications as they move deeper into the 21st century.

CONCLUSION

What is so often forgotten by states, especially homogenous ones, is that before immigrants—even before the traditional Scandinavian societies settled—the aboriginal people were already there, distinctive cultures established yet evolving. It is this difference that separates aboriginal peoples from other minority groups and underlies their special legal—and in many cases, constitutional—status.⁴³ By highlighting the major political trends among two Scandinavian indigenous policies we can discover patterns of perception toward 'the other' that can indicate patterns of development of social attitudes toward future minority policies.

While the Norwegian population is largely homogenous with historical elements of assimilation, the government has not shown a dedication to remuneration. The Sámi Parliament has only power of suggestion, though it has made headway in linguistic and land rights. What primarily distinguishes Norway from Sweden is its recognition of contemporary problems as Sámi issues, not merely environmental issues. A willingness to identify minority needs can translate well when addressing indigenous to immigrant groups. Conversely, Sweden demonstrates stronger preferences towards minority assimilation among both its indigenous and immigrant populations. While Sweden has ratified several treaties that support minority rights and open channels for international criticism, it has circumvented the domestic impact of international treaties (such as ILO 169) and continues to show reluctance at multiple levels of government to recognize issues as relevant to Sámi populations.

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The 1996 Canadian case, *R. v. Van der Peet* established the widespread use of the “Van der Peet test,” which gave courts the ability to determine what constituted a valid indigenous right. A major critique of the test is that it recognizes only indigenous practices that existed before European contact. This is criticized as “freezing” indigenous rights to a pre-colonization era without considering the natural evolution of societies in adapting and changing over time. Perceiving only pre-colonial rights as legitimate is an ethnocentric view, as it is not equally applied to the rights of non-indigenous colonizers and later immigrants.⁴⁴ With this in mind, legitimizing the needs and practices of indigenous minorities consequently lends greater validity to the cultural needs of other ethnic minorities, including immigrants. States that have poorer track records in recognizing the needs of their indigenous minorities are less likely to legitimize the needs of newcomers. In other words, multicultural sentiments and discourses are capable of transferring across socioeconomic strata, even over prolonged time periods. While indigenous and immigrant populations are significantly different from one another, among Scandinavian societies, they are mutually defined as ‘others,’ sharing not only identities separate from that of the Scandinavian majority, but similar needs for group-specific recognition through policy.

Endnotes :

- ¹ William Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- ² Øyvind Ravna, “Recognition of Indigenous Lands Through the Norwegian 2005 Finnmark Act: An Important Example for Other Countries with Indigenous People?,” in *Indigenous Peoples’ Governance of Land and Protected Territories in the Arctic*, eds. T.M. Herman and T. Martin (New York: Springer, 2015), pp. 189–208.
- ³ Robert Van Krieken, “Between Assimilation and Multiculturalism: Models of Integration in Australia,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 45.6 (2012): 500–519.
- ⁴ Matthew Wright, “Policy Regimes and Normative Conceptions of Nationalism in Mass Public Opinion,” *Comparative Political Studies* 44.5 (2011): 598–624.
- ⁵ Van Krieken, “Between Assimilation and Multiculturalism: Models of Integration in Australia.”
- ⁶ Joe Feagin and Sean Elias, “Rethinking Racial Formation Theory: A

Systematic Race Critique,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36.6 (2012): 931–60.

- ⁷ The majority of immigrants moving to the Scandinavian countries are non-white, bringing a racial element into integration policy. Race is not reducible to ethnicity or class, but encompasses political and social organization, cultural meaning, and ties to a territory (Van Krieken 2012, 933). Strong parallel cultures can threaten the majority culture, which can see it as attempting to undermine the previous, homogeneous national culture.
- ⁸ Van Krieken, “Between Assimilation and Multiculturalism: Models of Integration in Australia.”
- ⁹ McIntosh L, “Impossible presence: Race, nation and the cultural politics of ‘being Norwegian’.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38.2 (2005):309-25.
- ¹⁰ Ravna, “Recognition of Indigenous Lands.”
- ¹¹ Mathisen, “Ethnic Identities in Global and Local Discourses: Contested Narratives of Sámi Ethnic Heritage,” in Jari Kupiainen, Erkki Sevänen, and John A. Stotesbury eds., *Cultural Identity in Transition: Contemporary Conditions, Practices and Politics of a Global Phenomenon* (Delhi: Atlantic, 2004).
- ¹² A lack of Sámi census since the late 1800s, along with many Sámi having assimilated into Norwegian culture, has led to uncertainty and a wide range of estimates.
- ¹³ Sigrid Aksnes Stykket, “Oral Tradisjon I Norge—folkediktning, Eventyr, Og Ballader,” 2015. This was also the time where Asbjornsen and Moe collected and published their first collection of Norwegian folktales (1841), a publication many literary scholars see as fueling national interest in everything “uniquely Norwegian.” The mid-1800s saw a push of cultural, political, and economic efforts to unify a rural and disconnected population.
- ¹⁴ Harald Eidheim, *Aspects of the Lappish Minority Situation* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1974).
- ¹⁵ Bjørn Aarseth, *Norsk Samepolitikk 1945-1990: Målsetting, Virkemidler, Og Resultater* (Oslo: Norsk Folkemuseum, 2006).
- ¹⁶ This gain is not limited to within Norway—the Sámi flag and anthem are universal to Sámi in all four nations: Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Russia.
- ¹⁷ The Constitution of Norway, Article 110§ A.
- ¹⁸ Tanja Joona, “The Political Recognition and Ratification of ILO Convention No. 169 in Finland, With Some Comparison to Sweden and Norway,” *Nordic Journal of Human Rights* 23.3 (2005): 306–21.
- ¹⁹ Roger Kvist, “The Racist Legacy in Modern Swedish Sámi Policy,” *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 14.2 (1993): 203-220.
- ²⁰ Prior acts were established in 1886 and 1989. Later 1928 and 1971 acts also

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- severely limited grazing rights. The policies continue to this day.
- ²¹ Harald Eidheim, *Aspects of the Lappish Minority Situation* (Oslo: University of Oslo Press, 1987).
- ²² Kvist, “The Racist Legacy in Modern Swedish Sámi Policy.”
- ²³ James Youngblood Henderson, *First Nations Jurisprudence and Aboriginal Rights: Defining the Just Society* (Saskatchewan: Native Law Centre, University of Saskatchewan, 2006), 90.
- ²⁴ Cho Sangmi and Micalle Mor Barak, “Understanding of Diversity and Inclusion in a Perceived Homogeneous Culture: A Study of Organizational Commitment and Job Performance Among Korean Employees,” *Administration in Social Work* 32.4 (2008): 100–126.
- ²⁵ As compared to Canada or the United States, where the colonizing populations were themselves heterogeneous.
- ²⁶ Anne Usher, *Dams as Aid* (London: Routledge, 1997).
- ²⁷ Gail Osherenko and Oran Young, *The Age of the Arctic: Hot Conflicts and Cold Realities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- ²⁸ David Crouch, “Sweden’s Indigenous Sámi People Win Rights Battle against State,” *The Guardian*, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/03/sweden-indigenous-sámi-people-win-rights-battle-against-state>. Accessed: 24.07.23.
- ²⁹ Attorney General Anna Skarhed, qtd. in Crouch.
- ³⁰ Sámi complaints range from the international financing of the project to inadequate compensation and classification. While the government has not offered compensation, the company itself (*Sveveind*), has stated its willingness to compensate the Sámi.
- ³¹ Philip Burgess, “Sámi Council Criticize German Bank Funding of Wind Power on Reindeer Pastures,” *Reindeer Herding*, 2010, <http://reindeerherding.org/blog/reindeer-blog/Sámi-council-criticize-german-bank-funding-of-wind-power-on-reindeer-pastures/>. Accessed: 24.07.23.
- ³² Anders Sønstebø, “Samisk Statistikk 2018 Sámi Statistihkka 2018,” https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/_attachment/339026?_ts=16151cb7dd0. Accessed: 05.05.2018.
- ³³ Karolina Nikielska-Sekua, ‘Selected aspects of Norwegian immigration policy towards children’, *Central and Eastern European Migration Review* 5.1 (2016):129-44.
- ³⁴ O. Kaldheim, R. Abrahamsen, S. Berntsen et al. (2011). NOU 2011:14. Bedre integrering. Mål. Strategier. Tiltak [Official Norwegian report (2011:14). Improved integration. Aims. Strategies. Actions]. Oslo: Barne-, likestillings- og integreringsdepartementet.
- ³⁵ Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today* (John Wiley & Sons; 2019 Oct 25).

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- ³⁶ Demker Marie ‘Generösare attityd till flyktingmottagande i Sverige’, in Holmberg Sören, Weibull Lennart eds. *Svensk höst* (Gothenburg: SOM institutet, 2009).
- ³⁷ A. Hellström, *How anti-immigration views were articulated in Sweden during and after 2015*. Malmö universitet; 2021.
- ³⁸ A. Hellström, *How anti-immigration views were articulated in Sweden during and after 2015*.
- ³⁹ J. Strömbäck, F. Andersson, & E. Nedlund, ‘Invandring i Medierna: Hur Rapporterade Svenska Tidningar 2005–2015?’, *The Migration Studies Delegation*, Report 6 (2017).
- ⁴⁰ G. Hall, G. Cook, ‘Own-language use in language teaching and learning’, *Language teaching* 45.3 (2012):271-308.
- ⁴¹ Nikielska-Sekula, ‘Selected aspects of Norwegian immigration policy towards children’.
- ⁴² Nikielska-Sekula, ‘Selected aspects of Norwegian immigration policy towards children’.
- ⁴³ J.Y. Henderson, *First Nations Jurisprudence and Aboriginal Rights: Defining the Just Society* (Saskatoon : Native Law Centre, University of Saskatchewan, 2006).
- ⁴⁴ Abigail Eisenberg, ‘Reasoning about the Identity of Aboriginal People,’ in *Accommodating Cultural Diversity*, ed. Stephen Tierney (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), pp. 80–81.